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interests, specializations, and direction your practitioner has followed in training, he or she may or may not have a background in all the areas now developed by Barral.

## Goals of VM

*The purpose of Visceral Manipulation is to recreate, harmonize, and increase proprioceptive communication in the body to enhance its internal mechanism for better health.*

—Jean-Pierre Barral

Visceral Manipulation aims to find and resolve tensions in tissues and thereby restore normal motion to them. Jean-Pierre Barral, the developer of Visceral Manipulation, believes that practitioners of VM should “let the organism find the answer for itself.” A large part of VM involves precisely identifying the structure that is causing the greatest problem for the body at that time. When teaching, he regularly says, “only the tissues know,” and “let the body speak”—showing a great respect for the body’s internal balance and following its lead. Throughout each session, whether during evaluation or treatment, your practitioner will be continuously feeling where the tensions are in your body and how they are responding to treatment to find your precise pathway to health. It is not possible to guess how your body is restricted, and VM depends on the principle of feeling and following your tissues to allow them to release.

While VM started with the focus of restoring normal motion to organs, it has now developed to include working with the circulatory and nervous systems. Reducing inflammation and pain by returning circulation to the body at all levels—from blood circulation in the arteries and veins to lymphatic flow at the tissue and cellular level—is a goal of VM treatment. By improving the nerve supply and balance of the body, and allowing improved functioning of the organs and sphincters (valves in the tissues) it allows the body to function more optimally. Proper muscle

tone is returned by reducing the compression on muscles, which allows them to function better. Ultimately, VM aims to reestablish the body's ability to adapt and restore itself to health.

In summary, VM aims:

1. To return physiologic motion to the tissues, thereby enhancing normal movement of the body. This includes the movement of the structures in relationship to each other, as well as the motion within each structure.
2. To release and/or resolve a restriction of the tissue, including adhesions or scars.
3. To increase the rate of tissue repair.
4. To return normal circulation to the body.
5. To restore normal nerve function and stimulate nerve flow in the area being treated.
6. To increase communication within the body through improved functioning of the nervous system, circulation, lymphatic, and breathing systems.
7. To improve breakdown and removal of waste products.
8. To reduce inflammation and pain.
9. To improve the delivery of hormones and chemicals to cells.
10. To aid mood and sleep. This is partly through the effect that serotonin levels have on these issues and the role that the digestive system plays in making this hormone.
11. To normalize tone in muscles and promote normal functioning.
12. To reduce spasms or areas of increased tissue tension
13. To return normal function to sphincters. (See Chapter Eight, "Digestive System," for a description of sphincters.)
14. To promote normal cell-fluid motion and balance.

Your practitioner uses this to confirm he or she has found the precise location of your restriction.




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Figure 5.4. Local  
Listening with  
Inhibition

After the precise location of the tension has been identified your practitioner will place a hand on that structure to find out more about the exact nature of the restriction. He or she will be feeling whether the restricted site is limited in its scope to only affecting the local area or if it extends to more of the surrounding tissues, possibly involving other organs or structures.

## Mobility

Mobility is the term used to describe how movable a structure is relative to the surrounding tissues. No part of your body exists in isolation, with every tissue or even every cell in your body being dependent on those around it for support and movement. Your tissues should be able to articulate with each other, and have good slide and glide (that is, ability for the organs to move freely against one another) with adjacent tissues and muscles. For example, the liver should be able to move easily in relationship to the diaphragm and the stomach. Mobility tests involve your practitioner's gently moving a tissue in different directions against the tissues around it to find out if it has enough movement, stretch and support from the surrounding structures. (See Figure 5.5.) There may